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AUTHOR Paine, Fred K.
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ABSTRACT

To outline the development of smoking as a health issue as it was covered by magazines, a study tested the hypotheses that (1) the pattern of media attention to the issue would begin in professional and scientific journals, expand into books and government publications, and then appear in consumer magazines; and (2) the distribution of subtopics within the issue would show that a specific subtopic was given wide attention at a particular period. To test the hypotheses, the number of articles on smoking published each year as indexed in "Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature," the "Current List of Medical Literature," and the "Cumulated Index Medicus" was counted. Titles were not categorized for medical journal articles as they primarily concerned physiological effects of cigarettes and smoke. Titles listed in the "Reader's Guide" were categorized according to the following subjects: smoking and health, quitting the habit, antismoking campaigns, nonsmoker's rights, consumer information, ethics, youth, business, advertising, and other tobacco products. Data revealed that, in fact, the earliest coverage of the issue appeared in medical journals, then science periodicals, and finally general interest magazines. However, it was found that popular magazines covered the issue before government publications and books, and played an important role in promoting awareness of the issue. Finally, the second hypothesis was illustrated by change in emphasis over time from articles on smokers' health to ones concerning ethics. (CRH)

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Smoking and Health:

Role of Magazines in the Development of an Issue

By Fred K. Paine

Development of issue mapped.
Specialized, then general periodicals
played important role in debate; books followed.

"Cigarette smoking is clearly identified as the chief preventable cause of death in our society and the most important public health issue of our time," said Surgeon General C. Everett Koop in his 1982 report. Every year more than 340,000 Americans die because they have smoked cigarettes. Even though knowledge of the dangers of smoking has been in existence since the early 1930's, public awareness of the problem did not begin to emerge until the early 1950's. Lack of awareness was related to low media coverage of the smoking and health question, and low audience attention to what media coverage there was.

This study will consider the smoking and health issue from two perspectives. First it will analyze the development pattern of the issue as reflected in periodical and book coverage to determine which publications gave the issue first attention. Analysis of these publications will suggest which segments of the public first became aware of and interested in the issue. Second we can determine the rise and fall of interest in the issue over time by counting the number of

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articles dealing with the subject per year.

The manageably short life of the smoking and health issue provides an opportunity for studying it over the long run. Tracing the spread of influence over time is "the key to the reorientation of mass communication research from the study of 'campaigns' to the study of diffusion."[1]

MEDIA/ISSUE RELATIONSHIP

The effects of the media on opinion being most important over the long-run, many articles over many years may alter a firmly held opinion. Most of what an individual learns about the larger world comes from the mass media. In studying helath issues in 1952, Cannell and MacDonald found that most persons receive their information on the smoking and health issue only through the mass media.[2] The media raise and define new issues and ideas, inviting controversy and discussion, and legitimizing them as appropriate issues for public interest,[3] while providing relevant information to make discussion possible. Yet wide media presentation of an issue does not ensure that every member of the public will be exposed to it. Selective exposure acts to prevent some from attending to information. Klapper found smokers less likely than non-smokers to read newspaper articles which connected smoking with cancer.[4] Cannell and MacDonald similarly found that non-smokers were more likely than smokers to read health and science articles.

HYPOTHESES

In tracing the development of an issue through the media, it becomes relevant to know when media interest begins, rises and falls, and which media cover the issue in chronological relation to other media. Tichenor et. al suggest a pattern in media

coverage as an issue develops. Coverage begins in publications directed at relatively isolated special interest groups and professional circles, and moves through books and government publications to the mass media.[5] Hence, Hypothesis I is that there will be a pattern of media attention to the smoking and health issue: Coverage will begin in professional and scientific journals, expand into books and government publications and then appear in consumer magazines having mass appeal.

In providing particular information to carry on discussion of an issue, the media help structure that issue. Discussion moves in one direction or another as new perspectives and facts appear. Analysis of media content will show which aspects appeared important at a particular time in the issue's development. Hypothesis II is that distribution of subtopics within the smoking and health issue will show that a specific subtopic is given wide attention at a particular period: When the relationship between smoking and cancer is accepted, subtopics will arise, expanding the original issue into new avenues. More articles will appear immediately following major discoveries or announcements.

Finally, the media may provide direction for an issue. Casting a negative or positive slant, however subtly, on media content may have an effect on the direction the controversy takes. For example, portraying tobacco use in films and advertising encouraged social acceptance of smoking, particularly among women. Anti-cigarette commercials and media acknowledgement of the validity of scientific studies condemning cigarette smoking discouraged it.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ISSUE

The earliest inquiries into the effects of smoking on health began about 1900 as statisticians and pathologists noted the increase in deaths among smokers. During the 1930's the subject became increasingly popular for medical research: Studies by Dr. Raymond Pearl (1938), and others suggested links between smoking and premature death, cancer and heart disease. Evidence against smoking continued mounting with studies by Dr. Cuyler Hammond (1949), Drs. Ernest Wynder and Evarts Graham (1950) and Drs. Richard Doll and Bradford Hill (1952) which linked lung cancer to cigarette smoking. In 1953, The American Cancer Society called the rise in lung cancer a national epidemic. Such studies continued through the 1950's.

The early 1950's saw public awareness of the issue tapped. A Reader's Digest article, "Cancer by the Carton," appeared in December 1952 and is one of the first important references to the dangers of smoking in the popular media. However, not all media coverage at this time was of negative direction. A November 1950 article in Collier's reported the pros and cons, emphasizing the benefits of smoking and advising readers "Don't Smoke Unless You Like It."

In 1957, a scientific study commissioned by the Surgeon General concluded there was a definite causal relationship between excessive smoking and lung cancer. And in July of that year, the Surgeon General spoke for the Public Health Service and affirmed the causal relationship officially. Congressional hearings in 1957 investigated the responsibility of the FTC regarding advertising claims for filter cigarettes, giving both the tobacco industry and the medical profession opportunity to present their views. A 1958 report con-

cluded Americans had been deceived by advertising claims, but the committee was reorganized out of existence before hearings had been completed.

The next milestone was 1964, when the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee released its dramatic assessment of the dangers of smoking. In 1965, legislation was passed requiring warnings on cigarette packages. In 1968, The Supreme Court upheld an FTC ruling allowing free network television time for anti-cigarette commercials; in 1970, legislation was passed requiring warnings in cigarette commercials; and in 1971, cigarette commercials were banned from television.

The 1970's saw the formation of numerous non-smokers' groups formed to protect their right to smokeless air. In 1978, the Department of Health Education and Welfare undertook an anti-smoking campaign designed to convince smokers to quit. By 1978, 30 states had passed some legislation restricting smoking in public places; and by 1983, increasingly restrictive laws had been passed in 36 states. In June, 1983, Newsweek reported that "To smoke or not to smoke has changed from a simple question of health and habit to an explosive issue of civil rights and social ettiquete."[6]

METHODOLOGY

To test the hypotheses, the number of articles on smoking in consumer magazines, science magazines and professional journals were counted. The count was of articles indexed in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and the Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus (1925-1957), the Current List of Medical Literature (1957-1960) and the Cumulated Index Medicus (1960-1983).

Media were analyzed from 1925 to 1983. The range of the study thus included approximately five years prior to the time the issue became of medical concern until the present. Three medical indices were needed to cover the entire period of the study. The Quarterly Cululative Index Medicus and the Cumulated Index Medicus were generally comparable, while the Current List of Medical Literature was differently organized and used different subject categories. However, it was the only available index covering the time span from 1957 to 1960. In addition the number of books published on smoking was determined from the Cumulative Book Index.

The purpose of analysis was to count articles and books written on smoking for each year.[7] All articles listed in the Reader's Guide under tobacco, cigarettes, smoking and their subheads were listed, counted, sorted by publication title and categorized by subject. The following categories were used:

1. Smoking and Health: Physical and psychological effects of cigarettes. Articles which rejected scientific evidence of cigarette dangers.

2. Quitting the habit: How to quit; individual experiences with quitting.

3. Anti-smoking campaigns: Community or group efforts to encourage people to quit.

4. Non-smokers' rights: Dangers of cigarette smoke to non-smokers, their right to avoid such smoke, legislation to ensure their rights, groups formed to promote such legislation.

5. Consumer information: Development of filters, effectiveness of varying filters, discussion of which cigarettes might be safer, synthetic cigarettes.

6. Ethics: Ethical problems such as advertising a cancer-causing product or export sales of a hazard to the third world; growing health hazard caused by cigarettes throughout the world.

7. Youth: Smoking in schools: Sub-classification "youth" in Reader's Guide.

8. Business: Tobacco industry, business trends and problems, cigarette consumption, package labeling.

9. Advertising: Sub-classification Tobacco: Advertising in Reader's Guide; Anti-cigarette commercials.

10. Other tobacco products: pipes, chewing tobacco, etc.

Titles were not categorized for medical journal articles; the subjects of these articles primarily concerned pysiological effects of cigarettes and smoke.[8]

In the earliest medical index, articles under the heading "tobacco" were counted as there was no heading for smoking. In the later indices, articles under the heading "Tobacco: effects on human beings" were cross-referenced under "smoking" so only those under "smoking" were counted. Only articles published in United States journals were counted.

FINDINGS

Table I illustrates the total number of periodical articles dealing with smoking and tobacco. As expected, medical journals contained more articles on smoking between 1925 and 1943 than popular magazines. There were no dramatic fluctuations in the number of articles during these years for either group of publications. Between 1944 and 1950, medical journal coverage was somewhat less than it had been, dropping to the level of popular magazine coverage. Between 1950 and 1954 both groups of publications showed a parallel increase in the number of articles per year.

The following ten years, 1955-1965, were most important in defining for the public the physiological hazards of smoking. The number of articles in both types of publications reached high points -- in 1959, medical journals carried 119 articles; in 1964, popular magazines

carried 113 articles.

Beginning in 1964, medical journals began to show a steady increase in coverage, having between 250 and 300 articles per year for the last seven years of the study.[9]

Popular magazines generally decreased the number of articles, having between 20 and 60 articles per year.

Table II shows the distribution of popular magazine articles in the smoking and health category by type of magazine. In every 5-year period until 1960, science periodicals[10] contained more articles than any other type of popular magazine. Beginning in 1950, other types of magazines began to carry more smoking and health articles, increasing to the level of science magazine coverage as the medical evidence against smoking mounted.

Table III shows that book publishing remained fairly constant from 1925 until 1954; then each decade showed steady increases. This suggests that increased attention to the issue in books followed that of the professional and popular periodicals, rather than preceding them.

Hypothesis I is generally supported by the data. The earliest coverage of the smoking and health issue appeared in medical journals, then science periodicals and finally general interest magazines. Book publishing was relatively low, averaging between 1.5 and 2 books per year, until the mid-1950s when the number of books increased. Noteworthy government attention to the issue began in 1957, after the professional and popular periodicals, and about the same time as books. Contrary to the findings of Tichenor et. al., this study found popular magazines covering the issue before government publications and books, and thus playing an important role in

promoting awareness and discussion of the issue.

The second hypothesis dealt with the structure of the issue over time. It was postulated that different aspects of the issue would be highlighted by the media at various times, thus giving new dimensions to the issue. Breakdown of article titles into subject categories illustrates these emphases. Table IV shows the number of articles found for each subject category. The smoking and health category received the most attention, although beginning in 1955, numerous side issues began to gain importance. The rights of non-smokers, and the dangers of other peoples' cigarette smoke to them has become a most important aspect of the issue. In the last decade of the study, more articles(55) were written about this than any other subject category except smoking and health.(108) While the number of articles on smoking and health has decreased, the number of articles on non-smokers' rights has increased greatly.

Between 1955 and 1964, articles on consumer information reached a peak. These declined as the medical evidence condemned all smoking, even with so-called safe filters and synthetic cigarettes. The next decade showed the peak of articles on how-to-quit, reminding readers that no smoking was safe.

Recent years show an incipient awareness of the morality of selling death at home and abroad.

Table III divides books published from 1925 to 1980 into subject categories. Books on quitting smoking became slightly more popular at the same time as magazine articles on the subject, but the greatest proliferation of the topic did not begin until 1975. Several books have been written on the ethics of the tobacco industry, while only a few magazine articles have appeared on this topic to date.

Even within the smoking and health category the perspectives have beer changing. Earlier articles simply treated the question: Is smoking harmful? Later articles assume this fact, and detail new areas of danger, such as high risks to women and unborn children. Articles also deal with chemical content of smoke, how smoke causes lung disease or how cigarettes damage particular parts of the body.

DISCUSSION

When an issue such as smoking and health begins to develop, opposing interests turn to the mass media to present their opinions. Thus the medic become a major tool in the diffusion of opinions surrounding the issue. The first information was directed towards doctors and scientists rather than smokers. Early communication on the issue generally did not reach the public except through the two-step flow of communication from specialized groups to others, as from doctor to patient. When general interest periodicals did print articles on smoking and health, they often denied or questioned the validity of scientific claims that smoking was unhealthy.

The April 4, 1926 issue of Good Housekeeping carried the article "To Smoke or Not To Smoke." It described an Antioch College study of student smoking which revealed no relation between smoking and blood pressure, lung capacity or pulse. A November 1926 issue of Ladies Home Journal questioned "What Price Tobacco?" The article weighed the pros and cons of smoking and concluded it wasn't dangerous, except in excess. And Literary Digest carried a piece in "Defense of Smoking" in its November 14, 1925 issue. It suggested smoking was not dangerous, and wondered why those theories that smoking was injurious had continued so long unrefuted.

A typical article in the May 1950 issue of Coronet criticized the "alarmists and zealots" who were scaring Americans. It suggested that equally good research was available to refute such concerns. Popular business periodicals gave high coverage to the tobacco industry and its views.

Other propaganda in the form of cigarette advertising existed before the scientific data was released and continues long afterwards. It conditions people to accept smoking as natural, socially acceptable and enjoyable. Advertising also provides reassurance for the smoker: Who would expect the healthy, happy, attractive young people in the ads to die prematurely of lung cancer or heart disease?[11]

There were notable exceptions to the propaganda. Confronting its readership with the dangers of smoking, Reader's Digest which accepted no aducrtising at the time, printed more articles (69, or 4.3%) than any other general interest periodical indexed in Reader's Guide. Other magazines such as U.S. News and World Report (April, 1950), American Mercury (August, 1954 and April, 1958), Atlantic (January, 1956) and Ladies Home Journal (December, 1956) carried articles warning their readers. In the early fifties, a reader could find information to support whatever he believed about smoking.

In 1958 and 1964, the Surgeon General officially recognized the lethal nature of cigarettes. Articles aimed at allaying smokers' fears declined substantially; more articles appeared on how to quit and which cigarettes, if any, might be less dangerous. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, voices began to question whether cigarette smoke might be dangerous to non-smokers. Science magazine (Dec. 22, 1967) and the National Tuberculosis and Respiratory Disease Association Bulletin (March, 1972) carried articles on this subject.

And in November 1972, the Reader's Digest exhorted: "Non-Smokers Arise."

Bringing this facet of the issue to public attention and publicizing the activities of non-smokers groups, magazines have been instrumental in structuring discussion. In addition, magazines have been forums for the exchange of opinions, sources of information, highlighters of new ideas. In their presentation of scientific data, information on quitting, as well as tobacco industry propaganda, they have had a major effect on information diffusion and probably behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has outlined development of the smoking and health issue as covered by magazines. Controversy began with the offering of new information which questioned the safety of an established practice. The first facts were presented by and for a small group of professionals. As the evidence mounted, the popular media presented the issue for public discussion, becoming spokemen for both sides of the issue. At first there was avoidance of the new evidence by those in a position to communicate it to the public through the popular media. Two reasons might be suggested for this: First, strong financial pressures were exerted by the tobacco industry through its advertising dollars;[12] second, many of the gatekeepers were probably smokers, unwilling to attend to this evidence. Finally the government could no longer avoid taking a position on the issue; its support for the new evidence sparked public acceptance of it as fact. The public sought half-way measures such as less harmful cigarettes and different forms of tobacco rather than promptly acknowledge that all smoking caused illness and death. At the same time, the

issue expanded into new areas of discussion. Some of these are raised by magazines, others are promulgated and popularized by magazines. Through the entire development of the issue, magazines played an important role.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Elihu Katz, "The Diffusion of New Ideas and Practices," in The Science of Human Communication, ed. by Wilbur Schramm (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 83.

[2]Charles F. Cannell and James C. MacDonald, "The Impact of Health News on Attitudes and Behavior," Journalism Quarterly, 33 (1956), p. 315.

[3]Bernard Berelson, "Communications and Public Opinion," in Mass Communications, Second Edition, ed. by Wilbur Schramm (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1960), p. 540.

Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "The Mass Media and Voting," in American Voting Behavior, ed. by Eugene Brudick and Arthur J. Brodbeck (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1959), p. 232.

Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action," in Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America, ed. by Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (New York: Free Press, 1957), p. 461.

[4]Joseph T. Klapper, "The Social Effects of Mass Communication," in The Science of Human Communication, ed. by Wilbur Schramm, p. 68.

[5]P.J. Tichenor, G.A. Donohue, and C.N. Olien, and J.K. Bowers, "Environment and Public Opinion," The Journal of Environmental Education, 2 (Summer, 1971), p. 38.

[6]Newsweek, "Showdown on Smoking," June 6, 1983, p. 60.

[7]Use of a simple count of the number of articles leaves many variables unaccounted for: Circulation and readership of the publication, prominence of position within the magazine, length, prestige of the periodical and tone of the article may all contribute to the impact of a piece. However, in defining long-term development of the issue, a simple count does seem to be a reasonable indicator of the amount of information available to the public and the amount of attention the issue generally receives in the media.

[8]In later years, the medical index included more than strictly medical journals, such as psychological journals. Subject content included pyschological, sociological, consumption information as well as physiological effects.

FOOTNOTES (CONT.)

[9]One reason for this large an increase may be the increased number of articles indexed by Index Medicus. A March 5, 1984 letter to this author from Clifford Bachrach, editor of Index Medicus, indicates an increase of 25,000 English articles indexed between 1966 and 1967, the earliest years for which such information is available. Between 1966 and 1983, there was an increase of 140,000 English articles indexed.

[10]Science, Scientific American, Science Newsletter, etc.

[11]For further discussion, see:

Thomas Whiteside, Selling Death (New York: Liveright, 1971), pp. 3, 14.

Anthony Z. Roisman, "Nonsmokers Have Rights, Too," NTRDA Bulletin, April, 1971, p. 12.

Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century, Second Edition (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1964), p. 444.

[12]R.C. Smith, "Magazines' Smoking Habit," Columbia Journalism Review, 16(1978), pp. 29-31.

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Number of Medical Journal and Popular Magazine Articles Indexed 1925-1983

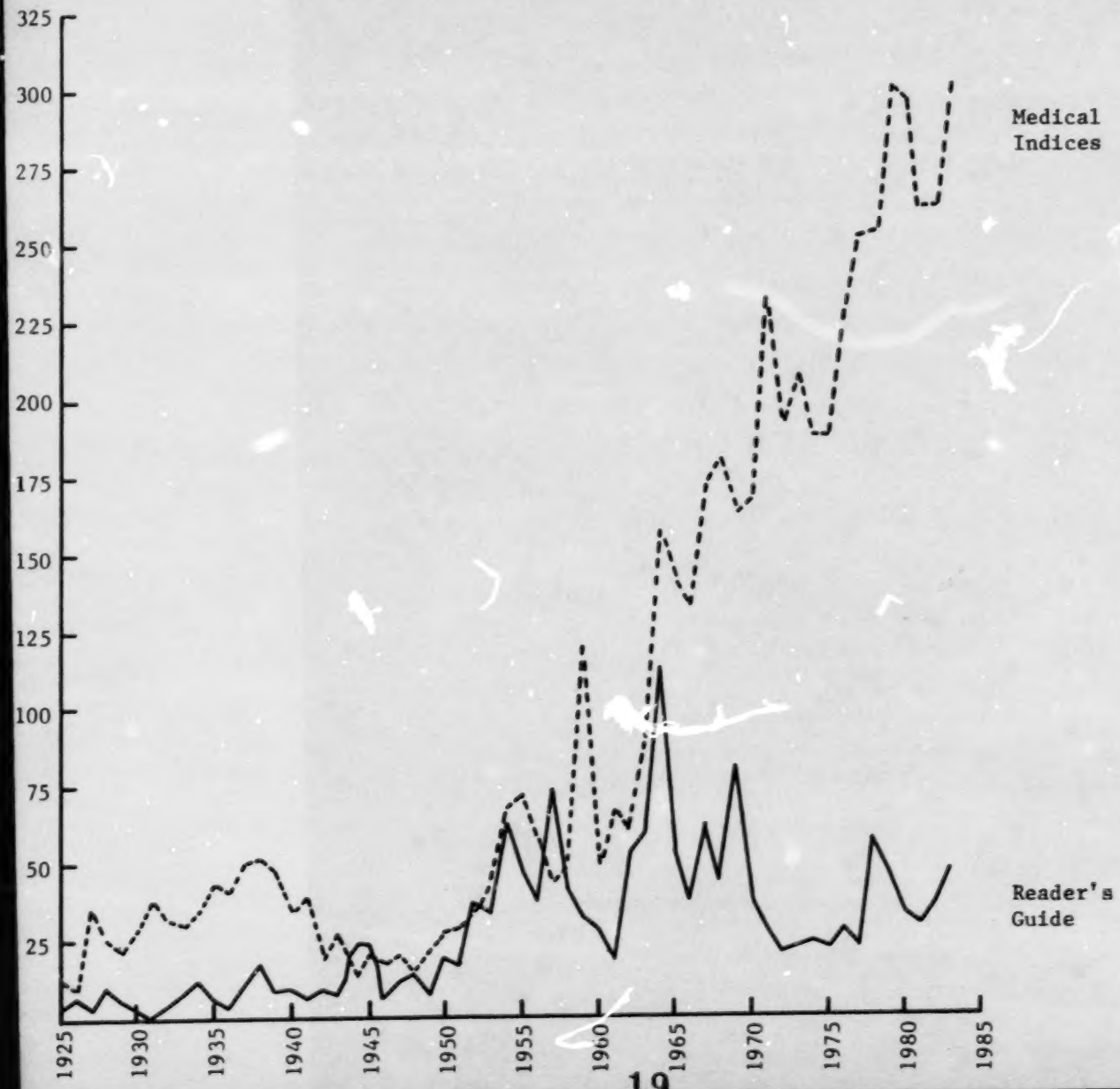

TABLE II

NUMBER OF INDEXED POPULAR MAGAZINE ARTICLES ON SMOKING AND HEALTH BY MAGAZINE TYPE

Period	Science Magazines	News Magazines	Business Magazines	General Interest Magazines
1925 - 1929	9	0	0	7
1930 - 1934	8	1	0	3
1935 - 1939	10	1	0	6
1940 - 1944	15	1	0	3
1945 - 1949	10	1	0	3
1950 - 1954	35	22	4	29
1955 - 1959	58	27	7	35
1960 - 1964	49	33	9	49
1965 - 1969	53	21	2	34
1970 - 1974	15	9	1	23
1975 - 1979	20	6	1	31
1980 - 1983	20	7	1	22
TOTAL	302	129	25	245

TABLE III

NUMBER OF BOOKS PUBLISHED BY SUBJECT ON SMOKING 1925-1980

Years	1925-1934	1935-1944	1945-1954	1955-1964	1965-1974	1975-* 1980
Quitting the habit	--	2	4	8	9	20
Smoking and health	10	10	5	12	14	15
Evils of smoking	--	1	2	4	3	2
Pleasures of smoking	--	1	3	3	6	6
Non-smokers rights;	--	--	--	5	2	5
Third World Problems, Ethics	--	--	--	--	1	3
Other	6	7	1	--	11	9
Total	16	21	15	32	46	53

* This period includes only 5 years, while the others on the table include ten years.

TABLE IV

NUMBER OF INDEXED POPULAR MAGAZINE ARTICLES BY SUBJECT CATEGORY 1925-1983

	1925-1934	1935-1944	1945-1954	1955-1964	1965-1974	1975-1983	Total
Smoking and health	28	36	104	267	158	108	701
Quitting the habit	0	7	7	26	53	34	127
Anti-smoking campaigns	0	0	1	2	9	16	28
Non-smokers' rights	3	0	0	4	16	55	78
Consumer information	1	3	14	56	30	14	118
Ethics	0	0	2	9	9	12	32
Youth	3	2	1	26	23	16	71
Business	11	30	70	57	23	38	229
Advertising	2	8	27	38	72	15	162
Other tobacco products		1	1	6	12	6	26
Unclassified	4	12	7	6	4	8	41
Total	52	99	234	497	409	322	1,613

Number of Medical Journal and Popular Magazine Articles Indexed 1925-1983